



What goes up must come down

*Survival equipment specialists
make sure aircrews land safely*

Story and photos
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Sometimes in the aviation world, things that go up don't come down as planned, and a little extra help is needed for aircrews to survive.

That's where the 412th Maintenance Squadron Survival Equipment element steps in.

The 12 military members and five civilians who work in Survival Equipment, sometimes called "the parachute shop," are responsible for inspecting, repairing and maintaining all parachutes, life rafts, escape slides and G-suits used at Edwards, along with myriad other items involved with aircrew survival.

According to Staff Sgt. Tim Mertes, the shop's noncommissioned officer in charge, the shop stays busy, averaging 15 parachute repacks per week. All the 'chutes used in cargo drops here also go through the shop.

"Last year we packed more than 500 parachutes for a C-17 cargo drop test. The 'chutes were used for 2.4 million pounds of equipment dropped over a six-month period," Mertes said.

The shop's work doesn't stop with the Air Force Flight Test Center. Items from the NASA-Dryden Flight Research Center, Plant 42 in Palmdale, Calif., and the Civilian Flight Test Center in Mojave, Calif., are regularly sent to Survival Equipment for maintenance.

"This is probably one of the most diverse shops in the Air Force," said Staff Sgt. Joel Kinney, assistant to the shop's NCOIC.

When the shop isn't taking care of survival equipment, it stays busy doing special projects.

"We recently manufactured ceremonial flag covers for the command chief master sergeant at Los Angeles Air Force Base," Mertes said. "We also just



Airman Adrian Moreno installs grommets in retaining straps he made for ACES II ejection seats.

finished a major re-upholstery of an aircraft on base. That project took two people more than three months of full-time work to complete."

Survival equipment specialists hope Edwards' aircrews will never need to use any of the equipment they maintain. However, if they do, they may rest assured the equipment is ready to get them down safely.



Senior Airman Joseph Duff stitches the end of a velcro strap. Sewing machines are used to repair G-suits and parachutes, as well as in many special projects.



Cargo parachutes hang from the 180-foot tower in the Survival Equipment shop. The tower is used to untangle and dry 'chutes used in cargo drops.



Senior Airman Jeremy Todd repacks an LPU-10/P life preserver after performing an annual inspection. The device is used by aircrews on heavy aircraft.